

OFF THE WIRE...(continued from page 4)

NATIONAL BOOK CRITICS CIRCLE ANNOUNCES AWARD WINNERS

The 19th annual National Book Critics Circle Award winners were announced last week in New York City. Chosen by the National Book Critics Circle Board of Directors, the awards are given annually to the best new books by American authors in five categories.

The 1993 winners are: Fiction, Ernest J. Gaines, *A Lesson Before Dying* (Knopf); General Nonfiction, Alan Lomax, *The Land Where the Blues Began* (Pantheon); Biography/Autobiography, Edmund White, *Genet* (Knopf); Poetry, Mark Doty, *My Alexandria* (University of Illinois); Criticism, John Dizikes, *Opera in America: A Cultural History* (Yale University).

The NBCC Board of Directors includes novelists, poets, freelance critics, and book critics or editors.

HARPERAUDIO JOINS INTERNET 'RADIO SHOW'

In a partnership that represents a venture into new territory for audio publishing, HarperAudio has licensed excerpts from 96 different spoken-word titles for distribution over the Internet. The Internet Multicasting Service, a non-profit research organization that bills itself as "the world's first cyberstation," has been given the right to "broadcast" four 10-minute excerpts from each of the tapes—more than 60 hours of programming—across the worldwide computer network. The tapes, from the HarperAudio and Caedmon imprints, feature famous writers and poets reading from their own works.

A new segment from the "HarperAudio!" on-line program is released between four and six times per week. The excerpts are posted to the Internet as data files that can be downloaded by any computer user with sound capabilities and enough disk space to hold the hefty programs, which average three megabytes each. These sound files consume perhaps 100 times more space than would the text alone, but IMS founder Carl Malamud estimates that 100,000 people in 30 countries access audio programming on the Net. "It's a tremendous cache of intellectual property," he said. "We started with T.S. Eliot reading 'The Wasteland' and moved on to Robert Frost and Ernest Hemingway."

Programming from IMS is modeled after public television. Sponsors are acknowledged during program breaks, and Harper gets an advertisement for its line of cassettes and catalog. HarperAudio Marketing Manager Carolyn Willis said the deal makes sense because Harper expects the newfound worldwide exposure to help raise interest in the product. "The segments are really going out as audio teasers," she explained. "As part of our agreement we also have gotten a mailbox on the Net. We've gotten pages and pages of responses from people, and it's only been on-line since January 15."

While Willis said she hopes the program will drive retail sales, would-be purchasers are directed to the company's toll-free customer service number instead of to bookstores. "We've been giving them a direct number because a lot of these tapes are not stocked by booksellers," she said. "The other thing is that because the Internet is worldwide, to say that these tapes are available at better bookstores is probably not even true for most of the world." Because requests for ordering information are forwarded to customer service, Willis said she did not know how many tapes Harper had actually sold as a result of the new program.

ANNOUNCEMENT

SHAKESPEARE FOR CHILDREN: The Story of Romeo and Juliet (Five Star Publications, \$9.95 pb, ISBN 0-9619853-3-X) by Cass Foster was selected by a panel of children for *Ladies Home Journal* (12/93) as one of "The Best Toys for Under \$10."

Available through Five Star Publications and Baker & Taylor.

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